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SIPDIS

TREASURY FOR OTI

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [KTFN](#) [TU](#) [GM](#) [FR](#) [UK](#)
SUBJECT: PKK IN EUROPE: SUSTAINING MOMENTUM

REF: A. ANKARA 2539
[1](#)B. BERLIN 988
[1](#)C. PARIS 1893
[1](#)D. LONDON 3122

Classified By: Charge Nancy McEldowney for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

This is an Action Request. See paras 8 and 9.

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Pushing for concrete law enforcement action against PKK criminal activity in Europe is a key next step, according to both European and Turkish reps during recent discussions in Ankara. To help achieve this goal, they identified three near-term action items:
-- raise the priority of PKK as a collection target for both intelligence and criminal data;
-- enhance coordination among law enforcement reps in Ankara;
-- establish trilateral working groups in Berlin and Paris. European reps noted that this approach held two significant advantages -- it was anti-crime, not anti-Kurdish (a politically sensitive point for many Europeans), and it held the potential of producing "actionable" evidence in a court setting that prior accusations of "terrorist affiliation" did not. The German rep noted recent arrests of organized crime figures with PKK links and the UK rep underscored the importance of the HMG's recent designation of the KGK as a terrorist group and successor to the PKK. Post welcomes commentary from Washington and Embassies Paris and Berlin on the mechanics of near-term establishment of trilateral working groups. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) In a July 28 meeting convened by DCM, French, German and UK DCMs along with MFA Assistant Secretary for Security Affairs Guven, discussed the way forward on our common efforts to combat PKK activity in Europe. All agreed that it was essential to maintain sustained robust efforts and not to lose the good momentum that has been achieved thus far. The group was in strong consensus that the essential step now was to move into a phase of concrete action by law enforcement officials. This would require close collaboration between Europeans, Turks and Americans in identifying principal targets and then proceeding to collect evidence of criminal activity that was sufficient to result in arrest and conviction.

Anti-crime versus anti-Kurdish

13. (C) The DCM stressed that the U.S. effort to enhance cooperation against the PKK in Europe was part of a broad-based effort to combat PKK terrorism in Turkey, Iraq and Europe. To increase the likelihood that law enforcement agencies would have the evidence and legal tools necessary to effectuate a crack down, she suggested a focus on the criminal activity of PKK-linked individuals and groups in Europe rather than reliance on harder-to-prove terrorism charges. When she pointed out that the PKK is the largest organized crime group in western Europe, Guven said a large majority of drug trafficking in Europe is conducted by Kurdish groups affiliated with the PKK.

14. (C) The European diplomats present strongly agreed with the idea that honing in on PKK criminal activity was a more practical way to achieve tangible results, although the UK rep said if you could establish a link to terrorism then UK law enforcement would have expanded powers against the individual in question. Guven reiterated Turkish frustration that, despite the EU Clearinghouse having designated the PKK, only in Germany is membership in the PKK a crime. The UK rep underscored the importance of Britain having now designated ("proscribed") KGK. Guven also urged a closer look at PKK-linked individuals' asylum and refugee status. Out of 110 PKK operatives against whom Turkey has issued Interpol red bulletins, Guven said 93 of them have refugee or asylum status.

15. (C) The European reps also agreed that by going after criminal activity, the effort is more anti-crime and less anti-Kurdish, thereby getting around some Europeans' misunderstanding of the PKK as representing the Kurdish community. Guven said it was important not to fall into the fallacy of believing the PKK represents Kurdish people since the organization brutally crushes any dissent from PKK orthodoxy within the Kurdish community. Renowned Kurdish politician Leyla Zana, for example, was in hiding, according to Guven, having incurred the wrath of the PKK. The DCM noted that veteran Kurdish politician Ahmet Turk had recently spoken out against the PKK. The French DCM said that French officials who become familiar with the Turkish situation come to understand the real nature of the PKK. Guven also agreed that the more action is taken against PKK terrorism, the easier it is for the GOT to implement domestic reforms that will improve the situation for Kurds in southeast Turkey.

Making PKK a Priority

16. (C) Guven said the fight against the PKK was the GOT's top priority. He said the PKK had about 1500 militants inside Turkey but that the organization relied on its European network for financing, indoctrination and propaganda, and recruitment. He went over some of the principal front organizations: Kurdish National Congress (Belgium), Konkurd (Belgium) and Karsaz (Germany), all of which are able to operate legally in western Europe. Other countries had an obligation under UN Security Council Resolution 1373 to cooperate to deter terrorism. At the June Prague conference on PKK, Guven said that Turkish officials had found the contacts with European law enforcement and intelligence officials useful. The Turkish delegation sensed, however, that the law enforcement and intelligence agencies needed to get a political message.

7.(C) The Europeans agreed on the need for governments to make collection against the PKK a higher priority, and noted the PKK has killed at least four foreigners in tourist areas in western Turkey. The German DCM said Germany takes the PKK very seriously. Germany had intensified cooperation with Turkey against PKK, only to be set back by court rulings opposing law enforcement actions against the Ozgur Politika newspaper and the Remzi Kartal extradition request. Guven confided that he understood why the Kartal extradition request was not strong enough to convince the German court.

Three Action Items

18. (C) There was general agreement, subject to approval in capitals, on three action items.

--raising the status of the PKK as a collection priority;
--enhance coordination among Ankara-based law enforcement agency representatives;
--establish trilateral working groups in Paris and Berlin.

19. (C) The idea behind the trilateral working groups is to deepen cooperation and make sure that all available information is being shared to generate law enforcement leads, both between countries and across agencies. Though individual posts and host governments are best placed to work out the mechanics, the groups would include U.S., host country and Turkish officials but also representatives of multiple relevant agencies with expertise--both law enforcement and intelligence. Post welcomes commentary from Washington and Embassies Paris and Berlin on the mechanics of near-term establishment of trilateral working groups. We also recommend Washington revisit the priority assigned to the PKK as a collection target.

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